WIKI POST 6/9 WRITIE TO LEARN  
RESPONSE TO PETER ELBOW ARTICLE: WRITING

In reading this article I highlighted 3 points in the text where I felt an immediate response. The first was the quote, “first grade students can write all the words they can say.” I believe this is true only if the classroom is supportive of freedom to write encouraging inventive spelling. Many classrooms I visit the children are restricted by a perceived requirement to use conventional spelling for all words. I often see students in these classrooms substituting words they cannot spell for words they can. Therefore the writer is not limited only to their vocabulary. For students at the early stages of reading, I agree that they are much more restricted. When limited to sight words and simple word family words, it is difficult to find a text that speaks to the students interests. In the right classroom, this is not true of writing.

Second: When we stop privileging reading over writing and stop encouraging passivity over activity…” I’m not convinced that writing is always aligned with activity and reading with passivity. As teachers it is tempting to believe this is the case as we can physically observe the thinking during writing that takes place. We cannot do the same for thinking during reading. However, that doesn’t mean it is not happening. Reading may be producing some thinking that is invisible, but dynamite. Writing, on the other had may be observable, but lacking in rich content. It is possible for an individual to write without thinking deeply, just as it is possible in reading.

However, when purposeful writing is going on, I imagine an individual (like myself) being forced (in a good way) to take the general/random thinking that often occurs in reading to a more concrete level. Where thoughts and ideas need to be organized to some level. That is what I feel when I write in response to reading.

Third: In both the chapter and the article, the writers discussed the use of writing first to speculate or predict. I believe in a motivated classroom this is a valuable activity. The precisio0n of the prediction/speculation requires the student to access his or her prior knowledge, without having to list it (as in a What Do You Know About…) to reach a decision. This is an activity that can be valuable across the curriculum. Unlike a What Do You Know About… it requires the student to stay focused on accessing specific knowledge, and not just addressing the information that comes most readily to mind.